

## Extending sustainability from food to fashion consumption

Ritch, Elaine L.

*Published in:*  
International Journal of Management Cases

*Publication date:*  
2014

*Document Version*  
Author accepted manuscript

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*  
Ritch, EL 2014, 'Extending sustainability from food to fashion consumption: the lived experience of working mothers', *International Journal of Management Cases*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 17-31.  
<[http://www.ijmc.org/ijmc/Vol\\_16.2.html](http://www.ijmc.org/ijmc/Vol_16.2.html)>

### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please view our takedown policy at <https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5179> for details of how to contact us.

Elaine L Ritch  
Heriot-Watt University  
Edinburgh  
UK  
[e.ritch@hw.ac.uk](mailto:e.ritch@hw.ac.uk)

# Extending sustainability from food to fashion consumption: the lived experience of working mothers

---

Conference track: fashion – marketing, management, retail, buying and merchandising

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to understand whether consumers transfer sustainable principles to fashion consumption behaviours. In recognising that the food industry has widened access for consumers concerned with fair transactions between the producer and retailer, environmental degradation and animal welfare through mainstream availability of Fairtrade, organic and free-range food, the research seeks to explore how consumers translate this into their fashion consumption behaviours. This paper presents the idiographic voices of mothers working in a professional occupation who have embraced sustainability in other consumption contexts and are beginning to transfer similar principles to their fashion consumption behaviours. Previous research identified that this demographic were most likely to embrace sustainable behaviours, however this was found to be juxtaposed within a myriad of lifestyle implications, such as financial and time restrictions. Underpinned by phenomenology (Thomson et al., 1989), unstructured interviews of 28 participants living in Edinburgh were interpreted through phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009). The results identify that fashion consumption is more complex than that of food, primarily as fashion is expressive of self and status, whereby the participants were reluctant to sacrifice their identity for production issues from which they are distanced. The use of fashion as a visible indicator within society extended to the children's appearance. Using Holbrook's (1999) Typology of Consumer Value as a framework, the paper argues that certain values are substituted to cope with chaotic lifestyles; the mothers' focus centred upon providing for the family. This offers justification for behaviours that may be perceived as a misalignment with moral ideology and was interpreted as appealing to a higher loyalty: that of the family over unsubstantiated claims of social and environmental exploitation.

Moreover, when the participants understood the implications of their behaviours in relation to sustainability, this has been adopted as part of the family's everyday behaviours.

Keywords: fashion, consumer behaviour, sustainability, mothers, children

## Introduction

Sustainability has increasingly become of interest to consumers, encouraged by government and non-government organisation (NGO) campaigns (Weise et al., 2012; Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009). Sustainability includes consideration for social-wellbeing, the environmental impact and stability of production (WCED, 1987), a concept which is increasingly prevalent within mainstream food sector (Szmigin et al., 2009). Campaigns to raise awareness for sustainability, such as reusing and reducing plastic bags, addressing the implications of food production and the country of origin to reduce carbon footprints are all addressed by mainstream food retailers (Yates, 2009). It has been argued that this stance has been shaped by market preference (Zabkar and Hosta, 2012; Shaw and Riach, 2011), whereby UK supermarkets now compete to illustrate their commitment to sustainable issues in an effort to align with consumers moral value (Yates, 2009). For example, consumers are encouraged to recycle waste, a behaviour motivated by marketing intermediaries and supported by doorstep collections and recycling facilities which are available in supermarkets (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Downing et al., 2004). Thus, supermarkets are nudging consumers to incorporate sustainable behaviours, as also identified within the increasing availability of local, Fairtrade and organic produce in the dominant supermarkets in the UK.

The Centre for Sustainable Fashion (2009) believes that the food industry has successfully positioned sustainably produced food as addressing consumers concerns, not only for production practice, but to communicate personal attributes that encourage consumer perceptions of sustainable food as added value. In contrast, the fashion industry encourages planned obsolescence of fashion consumption with continuously evolving fashion trends and reducing pricing (DEFRA, 2007) to encourage consumption. It is alleged that decreasing prices are a result of exploitative working practice for those working in the garment industry (War on Want, 2008; McMullen and Maher, 2009) as well as a reduction in the quality of the garments. For example, fast fashion garments are expected to last for around ten wears (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Increased consumption and reduced quality ultimately results in more garments being resigned to landfill (Winakor, 1969), however landfill is not infinite and it is anticipated that the UK will run out of landfill space within the next decade (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Little is known about how consumers engage

with sustainability within the context of fashion consumption. This research postulates that consumers increased awareness for sustainability has encouraged their consideration for sustainability in other consumption contexts through an effort to transfer sustainable principles. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to better understand how consumers perceive their ability to incorporate sustainability with fashion consumption.

Consumers seek value in their consumption, focusing decision-making on the idiosyncratic attributes that are important within their lifeworlds. This influenced the design of the research, whereby idiographic voices were sought through in-depth phenomenological interviews which offered an opportunity to explore the existential experience of the participants' lifeworld (Thomson et al., 1989). Contextualised within Holbrook's (1999) Typology of Consumer Value, the data was interpreted using phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009) to understand the participants perceptions of sustainability along with the practicalities of implementing sustainability within their everyday behaviours. Although previous research contends that demographics are insufficient to determine the likelihood of sustainable behaviours (Bray et al., 2011), it has been acknowledged that some factors increase engagement. For example, motherhood is considered as increasing awareness of sustainable issues, and in particular, results in a desire to purchase organic food to avoid their children ingesting the chemicals utilised during production (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Shaw et al., 2006). Similarly, higher education results in increased awareness of environmental issues (Kriwy and Mecking, 2012; do Paço and Raposo, 2010), which in turn results in motivation to adopt sustainable issues. As women are more interested and involved in fashion and tend to be the main shoppers in a household (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; Gutman and Mills, 1982), the sample focused upon mothers working in a professional occupation.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the literature exploring consumer decision-making, particularly for fashion consumption, is examined, utilising the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) as a framework to understand how consumers apply value. This is followed by describing the methodological approach and subsequently the findings and discussion. The findings illustrate the complexity of fashion consumption, where the visible statement of identity induces a conflict between functional behaviours and moral beliefs. This resulted in a trade-off of values, whereby sustainable behaviour was less of a priority than familial provisioning, particularly within the chaotic lifeworlds of working mothers.

## Consumer decision-making

Consumers evaluate consumption through an alignment with their needs and aspirations (Moisander et al., 2010; Workman and Studak, 2006). This includes lifestyle requirements, adherence to social conformity and marketing intermediaries (Olshavsky and Granbois, 2002). Holbrook (1991) asserts that this consists of eight interconnected types of consumer value that consumers consider within the transaction exchange (see Table 1), as consumers seek to maximise value. The purpose of the Typology of Consumer Value is to offer a 'systematic classification of social phenomena' to guide the data enquiry and identity pattern formation (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 73). This approach is empirically explored to understand the 'interactive relativistic preference experience' (Holbrook, 1999: 2). The interactive experience delineates that value is perceived objectively and subjectively, deriving not only from the product purchase, but the pleasure gained from ownership. This is of particular importance for fashion consumption, due appearance expressing self-identity, orientation and social reference groups (Webb, 2007). Therefore, fashion consumption extrinsically projects an image that may or may not be a reality (Belk et al., 2000), as well as intrinsically satisfying personal moral integrity. The relativistic experience includes decision-making that incorporates individual preferences based upon individual context or requirement. For example, the anticipation of an event may introduce the need for new fashion, or fashion consumption may be restricted by the time to source and access fashion selection. Consequently, Holbrook (1991) advises that consumption value is not only considered within the actual consumption act, but includes decision-making, the consumption experience in the retail environment and reflections upon the consumption choice.

**Table 1 Typology of Consumer Value**

		<b>Extrinsic</b>	<b>Intrinsic</b>
<b>Self-orientated</b>	Active	Efficiency (Convenience)	Play (Fun)
	Reactive	Excellence (Quality)	Aesthetics (Beauty)
<b>Other-orientated</b>	Active	Status (Success, Impression, Management)	Ethics (Virtue, Justice, Morality)
	Reactive	Esteem (Reputation, Materialism, Possessions)	Spirituality (Faith, Ecstasy, Sacredness, Magic)

(Holbrook, 1999: 12)

Having established the nature of the Typology of Consumer Value, the next sections will focus upon the interconnected types of value perceived within fashion consumption identified within the extant literature.

The value of efficiency is measured through the time it takes to select and purchase fashion. Lifestyles are said to induce time poverty, an aspect of increased importance for working mothers: the demands placed upon the working mother impact upon decision-making, reducing opportunities to source information, as well as allocating time to shop; therefore, solutions are often sought to simplify the process (Lepisto et al., 1991) and decisions are often based upon 'time, money and effort' (Schiffman and Kanul, 2010: 23). Thus, efficiency is perceived extrinsically as a competing role within a busy lifeworld and often convenience is sought to minimise the time devoted to consumption, a factor which Carey et al. (2008) believe to be unrepresented within academic research. Consequently, consumers are increasingly purchasing supermarket fashion due to the ability to reduce shopping trips through purchasing food and fashion simultaneously (de Kervenoal et al., 2011; Ross and Harradine, 2009). Excellence traditionally includes price, quality and convenience (Hansen et al., 2005; Mohr et al., 2001) and is reactively evaluated prior to consumption (Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995). Often consumers consider the price in relation to the quality of the product and this guides perceptions of value (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2001).

Status is actively sought due to extrinsic communication of self-identity and orientation, therefore symbolic attributes are often prioritised over utility (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Phau and Lo, 2004). Fashion is intrinsically linked with lifestyle characteristics (Park and Burns 2005) self-identity and seeking peer acceptance (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Faber et al. 1987). This has an impact upon social interaction, where appearance is evaluated and used to judge conformity, resulting in consumers dressing for acceptance or differentiation (Damhorst, 2005; Miller-Spillman, 2005), which Cherrier (2009) refers to as positional consumption. Status is connected to esteem, although esteem is reactively constructed to extrinsically conform to social expectations and acceptance within peer groups (Richens, 1999), as aspect reliant upon understanding symbolic agents within social reference groups (Kaiser, 2005; Ehrenberg, 2002).

Play is actively sought for intrinsic pleasure through, for example, the pleasure gained from the shopping experience (Workman and Studak, 2006) and the satisfaction of ownership (O'Cass and Choy, 2008). This links with aesthetic values, which are self-orientated, unfulfilled by utilitarian needs (Holbrook, 1999) and further enhanced through the being seen wearing fashionable attire (Wagner, 1999). In contrast, applying ethical concern reflects other-orientation,

through consideration of extrinsic factors, such as garment-workers and the environmental, which are judged upon understanding what constitutes production and whether this is viewed as exploitative. Cherrier (2006) suggests the diversity of applying moral principles is both situational and temporal, reflecting lifestyles which are subject to continuous change; within a lifetime consumers portray many roles, for example wife, professional, mother and self (Carey et al., 2008; Evans, 1989), all of which impact upon consumption behaviours. Often consumers are integrated within social groups of similar characteristics (Cherrier, 2006) which subjectively impacts upon their desire to align with within these social networks (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004), resulting in the sharing of information which can lead to behavioural change. Akin to ethics, spirituality is other-orientated and reactive, the embodiment of the experience as mystical for intrinsic value, adding to the 'emotional experience' of consumption (Park et al., 2006: 440). As such, fashion consumption is assumed as more complex than consumption within other contexts, therefore the decision-making process is not just a reflection of responding to consumers' needs, but includes psychological factors which dominate evaluation.

## Methodology

The extant literature has described fashion consumption as depicting self-identity; a self-orientated process which contrasts with the other-orientated application of moral value, this aspect is further exacerbated within a lifeworld of conflicting responsibility. Therefore, phenomenological interviews were considered as appropriate to explore the application of meaning, for example feeling, knowing, thinking, remembering (Thomson et al., 1989). To examine perceptions of the tenets of sustainability within the context of fashion consumption, it was considered appropriate to use garment labels which are currently available from UK high street fashion retailers depicting sustainable status to gain an insight into the decision-making process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Pink, 2005; Schwandt, 2003). The introduction of the labels offered an opportunity to observe the decision-making process, albeit without the actual garment, along with introducing concepts of sustainability. The labels included: M&S child's fleece made from recycled plastic bottles; M&S eco factory label; M&S organic cotton school shirts; John Lewis enzyme washed child's top; Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) charity t-shirt; Global Girlfriend woman's top (Fairtrade and organic). The EJF label contained information about child exploitation within the cotton industry and the Global Girlfriend label presented information about the woman workers non-profit, fair trade organisation in Nepal.

The participants were recruited initially through convenience sampling (Smith et al., 2009; Szmigin et al., 2009; Warren, 2001); the five pilot participants were requested to recommend five further participants who fitted the criteria of mothers who work in a professional occupation. To ensure that the participants were responsible for the children's fashion selection, mothers whose children were either pre-school or in primary education were selected. This mixture of convenience and snowball sampling resulted in 28 interviews which coincided with rich theoretical data saturation (Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009). The interviews were held in either the home of the researcher or participant, the researchers university, or a café and each lasted approximately an hour. Once transcribed in full, the narratives were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to explore the everyday meaning (Smith et al., 2009) applied to evaluating fashion consumption. This included double hermeneutics, where the researcher analysed the participants' interpretation of the application of meaning. The transcripts were coded within three categories: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual prior to determining recurrent themes (Smith et al., 2009). This was followed by grouping the themes into hierarchies and relationships, which resulted in emergent themes. The analysis of the application of value when selecting fashion for consumption follows in the next section.

## Findings

The participants illustrated an increased awareness of sustainability, facilitated through campaigns to apply the sustainable principles of reducing consumption, reusing commodities and recycling waste. Similarly the widened access of sustainably produced food in mainstream supermarkets enabled their ability to align consumption behaviours with moral ideology. This is important to note, as the participants describe chaotic lifeworlds (Lepisto et al., 1991) of managing work, home and child centric responsibilities (Carey et al., 2008; Cherrier, 2006; Evans, 1989) and this inspired a reliance on values that focused on managing the centrality of concerns that impacted on their everyday responsibilities (Schiffman and Kanul, 2010). As this was less obvious for fashion consumption behaviours, the participants had to translate sustainable principles and make assumptions as to what would pertain to an alignment with their moral ideology. It is this effort that contributes to knowledge of how consumers are extending sustainability into their behaviours and provides an insight of how fashion retailers can capitalise on this growing consumer trend. Beginning with the participants responses to encapsulate their efforts to transfer sustainable principles to fashion consumption behaviours (reduce, reuse and recycling), the narratives extend to consider consumption decision-making all of which are explained through Holbrook's (1999) Typology of Consumer Value.



### Reducing consumption

The participants tended to shop less for fashion for themselves since becoming mothers. This was due to a mixture of reduced time, finances and social occasions that necessitated new garments. However, fashion was still considered as expressing their sense of self and status (Webb, 2007), particularly within the working environment where professionalism was representative of their occupations (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Park and Burns, 2005; Phau and Lo, 2004; Richens, 1999; Faber et al., 1987). Further, it was important to some of the participants that they maintained awareness of fashion trends as this was illustrative of their active participation in an external world (Cherrier, 2009; Damhorst, 2005; Miller-Spillman, 2005; Wagner, 1999). Although their internal lifeworlds were focused closely on familial provisioning and well-being, the participants did not want to feel that they had 'let themselves go' (participant 14). Infrequent shopping trips for fashion were viewed as time for indulgence (Workman and Studak, 2006; O'Cass and Choy, 2008), where their focus temporarily transferred from the family to self. Higher priced fashion was viewed as pertaining to garments of a superior aesthetics, quality and fit, resulting in higher expectations of longevity (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2001). This resulted in a trade-off of value to ensure they had fashion that contributed to the image they wanted to portray as professional women, through efficiency and excellence that their garments were stylish and fitted them well. It also meant that clothing lasted for longer, reducing the need to replace garments. Consequently, the participants expressed that fashion was both self and other-orientated, extrinsically reacting to societal expectations of appearance and intrinsically validating their sense of self within their external lifeworlds. This process manifested as active, through seeking excellence of the garments fabric and construction, as well as reacting to current fashion trends. Efficiency was indicative through the reduced trips when time allowed fashion shopping and the experience sought transposed esteem and spiritual values that increased their satisfaction through placing a higher value of the garments purchased.

The disparity between the approach to purchasing fashion for themselves and their children was evident and motivated through the children's continuous growth. This encouraged values of efficiency through seeking convenient access and excellence where quality was substituted for lower pricing as a trade-off. Longevity was not required as the garments would not fit the child for very long. Consequently, supermarket fashion provided opportunities to purchase fashion when shopping for food (de kervenoal et al., 2011; Ross and Harradine, 2009), particularly as supermarkets are often open longer, located conveniently on bus routes and have ample parking facilities. Although the motivation to access fashion from the supermarket responded to self-orientated values, there was acknowledgment for other-orientated values, such as ethics, whereby the

participants expressed awareness of NGO campaigns alleging exploitation of garment-workers in developing countries. However, concern for garment-worker exploitation and potentially child labour were viewed as extrinsic, diverging from Holbrook's (1999) theory, as the implications were abstractly evaluated and overshadowed by intrinsic values of coping with their chaotic lifeworlds (Schiffman and Kanul, 2010: 23). Therefore, although the in other consumption contexts, notably food, the alignment of Fairtrade products in supermarkets provided an intrinsic ethical value of contributing to the wider implications of societal equality, for fashion familial provisioning and lifeworld management were prioritised. This indicates that moral integrity was a trade-off for lifeworld management; it was recognised that to align children's fashion consumption with moral ideology would result in less convenient shopping behaviours, such as internet shopping where the pricing would be far more prohibitive and depended on the reliance of being available for postal deliveries.

Purchasing fashion for the children also consisted of other values particular to the child, adding to the complexity. This included acknowledging the children's emerging socialisation and sense of belonging among their peers. Most of the participants allowed their children to choose fashion which was affordable and available in conveniently located retailers. This is self-orientated and intrinsically located through play as both mother and child gained pleasure from the shopping experience (Workman and Studak, 2006; O'Cass and Choy, 2008; Holbrook, 1999). The mother enjoyed observing and facilitating her child's emerging sense of self, resulting in feelings of intrinsic esteem through providing the child with desirable fashion (Wagner, 1999). The child also experienced feelings of esteem, albeit this was reflected extrinsically through an alignment with peers (Webb, 2007). Although it could be argued that children do not need fashionable garments, as children's fashion was purchased in high street and supermarkets, the styles resembled current fashion trends. Additionally, research identified that following fashion contributes to a child's socialisation, where the need to be considered as cool was important to a child establishing a sense of self (Pole et al., 2006; Main and Pople, 2011). Although this research did not include investigating the children's experience, the participants were aware that their children were establishing their sense of self among their peer groups and that their appearance played a role in their acceptance (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Richens, 1999; Faber et al., 1987). This indicates that fashion is a visible indicator of self and status, an aspect that was not compromised for either the participants or their children (Cherrier, 2009; Damhorst, 2005; Miller-Spillman, 2005).

Although the participants preferred to pay more for their own fashion to ensure that the garments consisted of a superior quality which aligned with excellence and status values, both these values were inverted for the children's fashion selection. As described above longevity was not expected due to the limited time

the child would fit the clothing. Additionally, it was expected that children's clothing experienced more friction through play, thus the participants were reluctant to pay more for clothing that was more prone to wear and tear. Paying less meant that the participants were not precious about children's play, as clothing could be easily replaced. Lower pricing also enabled the intrinsic value of status, as the visibility of providing children with new clothing to address their continuous growth ensured that the children looked smart (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Phau and Lo, 2004). This was of particular importance for school clothing, whereby a smart appearance transmitted shared values of the worth of education and communicated that the child was well cared for at home, with the aim that this would transfer to the child's experience at school. Thus, values of self-orientation are evident extrinsically, as supermarket fashion enabled efficiency and excellence which allowed the children the freedom to play without worry of damaging clothing as new garments were easily accessible. This was a trade-off for moral integrity, as the participants suspected that low priced fashion was produced under exploitative working conditions. Self-orientation is coupled with other-orientated values that actively reflect the status of the family through respecting a smart appearance, particularly at school, and intrinsically enabling esteem and spirituality through providing visual evidence of the care given to the child. This was also evident within the social groups within which the participants existed and led to the sharing of used children's clothing, as described next.

### **Networks of reusing children's clothing**

The participants' reliance on mothering networks that systematically passed used children's clothing was unexpected, due to the reduced price of children's fashion which reduced barriers to access. As established in the introduction, pricing reflected a reduction in the quality of garments, limiting longevity (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Therefore, it was unexpected that some children's garments were of sufficient quality to be passed on for re-wear. Nevertheless, the participants described active networks of passing clothes that pertained to a number of values, including efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, ethics and spirituality. Efficiency was experienced as the participants passed children's clothing within their social networks, which were founded upon shared lifestyle values (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Cherrier, 2006; Yuschisin and Johnson, 2004). Stigma of accepting hand-me-down clothing was not experienced as ethical values were both shared and focal within the activity of reuse, central to sustainable behaviours through diverting garments from landfill. Excellence was evident in the quality of clothing that was suitable for reuse and this contributed to feelings of esteem through superior familial provisioning that did not include a financial consequence. Status and esteem included involvement in network of shared ethical values, thus contributing to conformity within a social group where information was shared and endorsed

(Kaiser, 2005; Ehrenberg, 2002; Richens, 1999). This led to feelings of spirituality, whereby emotional feelings of moral ideology and behaviours align (Park et al., 2006), enhanced by the belief that exploitation of both garment-workers and the environment have been avoided. Within this aspect, there were no value trade-offs experienced as behaviours aligned with moral ideology and this further endorsed the sharing of used children's clothes. This ethos extended to recycling of household waste.

### Recycling textiles

The participants took a great deal of pride in their active contribution to recycling waste, detailing at length the reduction of household waste destined for landfill. This was supported by the children, whose awareness for sustainability came also from school, many of which had achieved eco-school status. Information of the types of material which could be recycled came from the local authority and what was collected through recycling schemes. However, this was inconsistent depending on which area of Midlothian the participants lived in. For example, some doorstep collections were limited to glass and cardboard, whereas others collected plastics. Only one participant was encouraged to recycle textiles through the doorstep collection. This illustrates that awareness originates from campaigns to encourage consumers' sustainable behaviours and without supported activities reduce many barriers to participate. Although there was limited knowledge of recycling textiles, a number of values were evident in the recycling of other household waste, including efficiency, play, status, esteem and spirituality.

Efficiency was experienced through doorstep collections, whereby putting waste out for recycling was viewed as similar to putting out rubbish. Often waste not collected by the local authority was saved up for recycling while shopping at the supermarket, therefore this was regular and convenient as it did not require a separate trip. Play was involved as the children were active in the recycling activity, motivated by what they had learned at school. This led to familial behaviours being endorsed through the education system and as such, the recycling behaviours were integral to family life. This expanded upon the social conformity of such behaviours (Kaiser, 2005; Ehrenberg, 2002; Richens, 1999), which was also linked with status and esteem through shared ethical values (Bannister and Hogg, 2007; Cherrier, 2006; Yuschisin and Johnson, 2004) that prioritised extrinsic concern for the environment through limiting waste to landfill and protecting scarce resources. Feelings of spirituality were experienced as the participants felt that they had "done my bit" (participant 3) to contribute to the wider implications of sustainability and protecting resources for future use. However, this was not as evident with textiles, particularly for the recycling of shoes, and the participants expressed confusion of where to donate textiles no longer required, especially when the clothing was not suitable for re-wear. This illustrates that once provided with information to guide behaviours,

as well as supporting behavioural change with facilities that are convenient, consumers are prepared to contribute to sustainability, an aspect that fashion retailers could capitalise upon. Currently, much of textile waste is designated to landfill, even when consumers are actively recycling other household waste materials.

### **Purchasing sustainably produced fashion**

As indicated, sustainable produce was often sought when shopping for food. This contributed to a number of values that not only reflected wider environmental and societal implications, but also added value to familial provisioning, such as the belief that as organic food is grown without pesticides this was a healthier option for children (Kriwy and Mecking, 2012). The widening of Fairtrade produce in supermarkets also enabled the participants to align their food consumption with moral ideology, whereby previous restrictions included access and price. Mainstream availability and global brands adopting Fairtrade principles meant that pricing was only marginally more expensive. This contributed to a number of extrinsic values for the participants, such as efficiency, excellence, status and esteem. The participants were not required to make personal sacrifices in terms of the convenience to access sustainable produce and there was also an assumption that sustainability contributed to a superior quality. Additionally, organic and Fairtrade products were considered as 'middle class' (Zabkar and Hosta, 2012; Cervellon et al., 2009; McEachern and McClean, 2002), thus reflecting the family's status (Kaiser, 2005; Ehrenberg, 2002; Richens, 1999). This links with Griskevicius et al. (2010) who identified that sustainable consumption was linked with transcending status and displaying wealth, which they refer to as conspicuous conservation through depicting pro-social behaviours as opposed to pro-self. The participants expressed esteem at being able to provide food that included personal attributes of increased health properties and contributing to the wider implications of sustainable consumption (Cherrier, 2006). Therefore, sustainable food consumption also contributed to intrinsic values of ethics and spirituality, compounded by superior familial provisioning and aligning behaviours with moral ideology.

This did not transfer to fashion consumption as both Fairtrade and organic garments are not integrated within mainstream retailers. The labels indicating sustainably produced garments available in high street retailers were appreciated by the participants, particularly as the price points were not prohibitive. Additionally, some participants had purchased garments from the Conscious Collection available at H&M, which resulted in feelings of added value similar to purchasing sustainable food in the supermarket. However, such opportunities were sporadic and primarily the participants focused on self-

orientated values of efficiency, excellence, play and aesthetics, attributes that are marketed to consumers to entice fashion consumption. In contrast the participants expressed that ethical fashion, such as Fairtrade and organic status, was more expensive, not available in high street fashion retailers and did not follow fashion trends, concurrent with research by Joergens (2006), Shaw et al. (2006) and Valor (2007). Without availability in mainstream fashion retailers, the participants were not prompted to consider other-orientated values of ethics and spirituality. This resulted in a value trade-off, where the time to source fashion and information to guide consumption was limited by their chaotic lifeworlds and the participants could not ascertain the same assurance that fashion had not been produced without exploitation as they could with food labelled Fairtrade or organic.

This illustrates that within the current fashion market, sustainable consumption has to be actively focused; consumers must prioritise extrinsic values of concern for avoiding garment-worker exploitation. Whereas within the food sector, consumers are reacting to prompts, such as labelling products with Fairtrade and organic that indicate that production is sustainable. Further, this implies that the transferral of sustainable principles is evident within fashion consumption and disposal behaviours, where consumers are taking guidance from the food sector, as indicated by the Centre for Sustainable Fashion (2009). The food sector has drawn consumers attention to what contributes to unsustainable practice within food production, such as pesticides containing chemicals that not only pollute the environment, but can be ingested and negotiations often include producers being exploited by the power of global companies. Although fashion is not ingested, there was still a perception that reducing chemical applications would be a purer option for children's textiles. Therefore, consumers can make choices to include the wider implications of their everyday behaviours rather than just cope with managing the myriad of responsibilities that constitute their lifeworlds, reflecting positional consumption that both aligns with intrinsic and extrinsic values (Cherrier, 2009) and reducing the conflict of moral ideology and fashion as indicative of self.

## Conclusion

This paper has contributed to deepening understanding of the value placed on sustainability within the current retail sector. This will be of interest to fashion marketers and managers who aspire to increase market share in a highly competitive retail sector that is driven by consumer demand. The widened access of sustainably produced food in mainstream supermarkets has enabled consumers to align their moral value with consumption behaviours, recognising that the added attributes contribute to values which are important for family provisioning. This was evident within the food sector, where sustainable

behaviours were supported by the availability of sustainably produced food in local supermarkets, which also included other sustainable facilities, such as recycling provisioning. This did not transfer to sustainable fashion behaviours due to the lack of sustainably produced fashion and a lack of information that supported recycling textile waste. This was further exacerbated through encouragement from the fashion industry to purchase more frequently garments with a limited lifespan, as well as fashion being a visible indicator of self and status. However, the participants illustrated the emergence of transferring sustainable behaviours from other consumption contexts to fashion. This was evident through networks of passing on children's clothing which included both self and other-orientated values of financial savings and diverting textile waste from landfill. However, the findings also illustrate that fashion consumption is primarily self-orientated, whereby sustainable sacrifices of conveniently accessing fashion, low pricing to enable consumption for children's continued growth and fashion expressing self, status and the children's socialisation were prioritised. To encourage consumers to consider the sustainable implications of their fashion consumption behaviours, more information of the impact of fashion production as well as the opportunity to recycle textiles is required. Fashion retailers that address those concerns have the opportunity to appeal to consumers concerned with sustainability, an ethos that is moving into mainstream consumption markets, and enable consumers to address the conflicting values that currently constitute fashion consumption decision-making.

## References

- Abraham-Murali, L and Littrell, M.A. 1995. Consumers' perceptions of apparel quality over time: An exploratory study. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*. 13 (3) pp 149 – 158
- Bakewell, C. and Mitchell, V.W. 2003. Generation Y female consumer decision making styles. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*. 31 (2) pp 95–106
- Banister, E.N. and Hogg, M.K. 2007. Consumers and their negative selves, and the implications. In: Hines, T and Bruce, M. eds. *Fashion Marketing Contemporary Issues*. Amsterdam; London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007. pp 217 – 227
- Belk, R.W., Ger, G, and Askegaard, S. 2000. The missing streetcar Named Desire. In: Ratneshwar, S, Mick, D.G. and Huffman, C. eds. *The why of consumption*. London: Routledge. pp 98 – 119



Bray, J., Johns, N. and Kilburn, D. 2011. An exploratory study into the factors impeding ethical consumption. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 98 (4) pp 597 – 608

Carey, L., Shaw, D. and Shui, E. 2008. The impact of ethical concerns on family consumer decision-making. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 32 (5) pp 553 – 560

Carrigan, M. and de Pelsmacker, P. 2009. Will ethical consumers sustain their values in the global credit crunch? *International Marketing Review*. 26 (6) pp 674 – 687

Centre For Sustainable Fashion. 2009. Tactics for Change. London College of Fashion [Online] Available from: [http://www.sustainable-fashion.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/CSF%20Volume%203 Tactics%20for%20Change.pdf](http://www.sustainable-fashion.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/CSF%20Volume%203%20Tactics%20for%20Change.pdf) [Accessed 8 April 2011]

Cervellon, M.C., Hjerth, B.A., Ricard, S. and Carey, L. 2009. Green in fashion? An exploratory study of national differences in consumers concern for eco-fashion. *Paper presented at Ethical Design Conference. Università Cattolica*. 7-8<sup>th</sup> May

Chen-Yu, H.J. and Kincade, D.H. 2001. Effects of product image at three stages of the consumer decision process for apparel products: Alternative evaluation, purchase and post purchase. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 5 (1) pp 29 – 43

Cherrier, H. 2009. Anti-consumption discourses and consumer-resistant identities. *Journal of Business Research*. 62 (2) pp 181 – 190

Cherrier, H. 2006. Consumer identity and moral obligations in non-plastic bag consumption: a dialectical perspective. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 30 (5) pp 515 – 523

Damhorst, M.L. 2005. Fashion as a social process. In: Damhorst, M.L., Miller-Spillman, K.A. and Michelman, S.O. eds. *The Meaning of dress*. Fairchild Publication. Inc: New York. pp 403 – 447

de Kervenoael, R., Canning, C., Palmer, M. and Hallsworth, A. 2011. Challenging market conventions. Supermarket diversification and consumer resistance in children's apparel purchases. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 15 (4) pp 464-485

DEFRA. 2007. *Sustainable clothing roadmap briefing note December. 2007: Sustainability impacts of clothing and current interventions*. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. [Online] Available from:



<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/products/roadmaps/clothing/documents/clothing-briefing-Dec07.pdf>

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. 2005. Paradigms and perspectives in contention. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. eds. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. California: Sage Publications. pp 183 – 190

do Paço, A.M.F. and Raposo, M.L.B. 2010. Green consumer market segmentation: empirical findings from Portugal. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 34 (4) pp 429 – 436

Downing, P., Cox, J. and Fell, D. 2004. *Bad habits & hard choices. In search of sustainable lifestyles*. Cambridge: Brook Lyndhurst. UK.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P.R. 2008. *Management research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Sage.

Ehrenberg, A.S.C. 2002. Pricing and brand differentiation. In: Foxall, G.R. ed. *Consumer behaviour analysis. Critical perspectives on business and management*. Volume 1. London: Routledge. pp 369 – 384

Evans, M. 1989. Consumer behaviour towards fashion. *European Journal of Marketing*. 23 (7) pp 7-15

Faber, R.J., O'Guinn, T.O. and Krych, R. 1987. Compulsive consumption. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 14 (1) pp 132 – 135

Goldsmith, R.E. and Clark, R.A. 2008. An analysis of factors affecting fashion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 12 (3) pp 308 – 322

Griskevicius, V., Tybur, J.M. and Van den Bergh, B. 2010. Going green to be seen: Status, reputation, and conspicuous conservation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 98 (3) pp 392 – 404

Gutman, J. and Mills, M.K. 1982. Fashion life style, self-concept, shopping orientation and store patronage: An integrative analysis. *Journal of Retailing*. 58 (2) Summer. pp 64 -86

Hansen, T. 2005. Perspectives on consumer decision-making: An integrated approach. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 4 (6) pp 420 – 437.

- Holbrook, M.B. 1999. Introduction to consumer value. In Holbrook, M.B. *Consumer Value A Framework for Analysis and research*. London: Routledge. pp 1 – 29
- Hustvedt, G. and Dickson, M.A. 2009. Consumer likelihood of purchasing organic cotton apparel. Influence of attitudes and self-identity. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 13 (1) pp 49 – 65
- Joergens, C. 2006. Ethical fashion: myth or future trend? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 10 (3) pp 360 – 371
- Kaiser, S.B. 2005. Identity, postmodernity, and the global apparel marketplace. In: Damhorst, M.L., Miller-Spillman, K.A. and Michelman, S.O. eds. *The Meaning of Dress*. Fairchild Publication. Inc: New York. pp 89 – 98
- Kriwy, P. & Mecking, R.A. 2012. Health and environmental consciousness, costs of behaviour and the purchase of organic food. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 36 (1) pp 30-37
- Lepisto, L.R., Stuenkel, J.K. and Anglin, L.K. 1991. Stress: An ignored situational influence. *Advances in Consumer Research*. 18 pp. 296 – 302
- Main, G. and Pople, L. 2011. Missing Out: A child centred analysis of material deprivation and subjective well-being. *The Children's Society*. [Online] Available from:  
[http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/missing\\_out\\_report\\_jan\\_2012.pdf](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/missing_out_report_jan_2012.pdf) [Accessed 26 June 2013]
- Mayo, E. and Fielder, A. 2006. I will if you will. *Consumer Policy Review*. 16 (4) pp 148 – 155
- Mayo, E. and Fielder, A. 2006. I will if you will. *Consumer Policy Review*. 16 (4) pp 148 – 155
- McMullen A and Maher S. 2009. Let's Clean Up Fashion 2009. *Labour Behind the Label*. Available from:  
<http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/resources/item/593-lets-clean-up-fashion-2009> [Accessed 22 January 2010]
- Miller-Spillman, K.A. 2005. Dress in the workplace. In: Damhorst, M.L., Miller-Spillman, K.A. and Michelman, S.O. eds. *The Meaning of Dress*. Fairchild Publication. Inc: New York. pp 217 – 259

Mohr, L.A., Webb, D.J. and Harris, K.E. 2001. Do consumers expect companies to be socially responsible? The impact of corporate social responsibility on buying behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. 35 (1) pp 45 – 72

Moisander, J. and Valtonen, A. 2006. *Qualitative marketing research: A cultural approach*. London: Sage.

Moisander, J., Markkula, A. and Eraranta, K. 2010. Construction of consumer choice in the market: challenges for environmental policy. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 34 (1) pp 73 - 79

Morgan, L.R. and Birtwistle, G. 2009. An investigation of young fashion consumers' disposal habits. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 33 (2) pp 180 – 198

Nutt Williams, E. and Morrow, S.L. 2009. Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A pan-paradigmatic perspective. *Psychology Research*. 19 (4/5) pp 576 – 582

O'Cass, A. and Choy, E. 2008. Studying Chinese generation Y consumers' involvement in fashion clothing and perceived brand status. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. 17 (5) pp 341 – 352

Olshavsky, R.W. and Granbois, D.H. 2002. Consumer decision-making – fact or fiction? *Journal of Consumer Research*. 6 (2) pp 93–10

Park, E.J., Kim, E.Y. and Forney, J.C. 2006. A structural model of fashion-orientated impulse buying behaviour. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 10 (4) pp 443 – 446

Park, H. and Stoel, L. 2005. A model of socially responsible buying / sourcing decision-making processes. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*. 33 (4) pp 235 – 248

Phau, I. and Lo, C.C. 2004. Profiling fashion innovators: A study of self-concept, impulse buying and Internet purchase intent. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 8 (4) pp 399 – 411

Pink, S. 2005. *Doing visual ethnography*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Pole, C., Pilcher, J., Edwards, T. and Boden, S. 2006. New consumers? Children, fashion and consumption. *Cultures of Consumption*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.consume.bbk.ac.uk/researchfindings/newconsumers.pdf> [[Accessed 16 October 2011]

- Richins, M.L. 1999. Possessions, materialism, and other-directedness in the expression of self. In: Holbrook, M.B. ed. *Consumer Value A Framework for Analysis and research*. London: Routledge. pp 85 – 105
- Ritchie, J. & Spencer, L. 1994. Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In: Bryman, A. and Burgess, B. eds. *Analyzing qualitative data*. Oxen: Routledge. pp173 - 194
- Ross, J. and Harradine, R. 2009. Value brands: cheap or trendy? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*. 14 (3) pp 350 – 366
- Schiffman, L.G. and Kanuk, L.L. 2010. *Consumer behavior*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Schwandt, T.A. 2003. Three epistemological stances for qualitative enquiry. In: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. eds. *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage. pp 292 – 327.
- Shaw, D., Newholm, T. and Dickinson, R. 2006. Consumption as voting: an exploration of consumer empowerment. *European Journal of Marketing*. 40 (9/10) pp 1049 – 1067
- Shaw, D. and Riach, K. 2011. Embracing ethical fields: constructing consumption in the margins. *European Journal of Marketing*. 45 (7/8) pp 1051-1067
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. 2009. *Interpretive phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage.
- Solomon, M.R. and Rabolt, N.J. 2009. *Consumer behaviour in fashion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Szmigin, I., Carrigan, M. and McEachern, M.G. 2009. The conscious consumer: taking a flexible approach to ethical behaviour. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 33 (2) pp 224 – 231
- Thomson, C.J., Locander, W.B. and Pollio, H.R. 1989. Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy of existential phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (2) pp 133 -146
- Wagner, J. 1999. Aesthetic value. Beauty in art and fashion. In: Holbrook, M.B. ed. *Consumer value. A framework for analysis and research*. London: Routledge. pp 126 – 146

War on Want. 2008. *Fashion Victims II. How UK clothing retailers are keeping workers in poverty*. War on Want: London.

Warren, S. 2005. Ready-to-wear watchdogs: "Smart" garments keep track of vital signs, hide odour. In: Damhorst, M.L., Miller-Spillman, K.A. and Michelman, S.O. eds. *The Meaning of Dress*. Fairchild Publication. Inc: New York. pp 519 – 520

WCED. 1987. *Our common future*. World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Webb, B. 2007. Retail brand marketing in the fashion industry. In: Hines, T. and Bruce, M. eds. *Fashion Marketing Contemporary Issues*. London: Butterworth-Heinemann. pp 107 – 129

Weise, A., Kellner, J., Lietke, B., Toporowski, W. and Zielke, S. 2012. Sustainability in retailing – a summative content analysis. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution*. 40 (4) pp 318-335

Winakor, G. 1969. The process of clothing consumption. *Journal of Home Economics*. 61 (8) pp 629 – 634

Workman, J.E. and Studak, C.M. 2006. Fashion consumers a fashion problem recognition style. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 30 (1) pp 75 – 84

Yates, L. 2009. Green expectations. *Consumer Focus* [Online] Available from: <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/publications/green-expectations-consumers%E2%80%99-understanding-of-green-claims-in-advertising>

Yurchisin, J. and Johnson, K.K.P. 2004. Compulsive buying behaviour and its relationship to perceived social status associated with buying, materialism, self-esteem and apparel-product involvement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*. 32 (3) pp 291 – 314

Zabkar, V. and Hosta, M. 2102. Willingness to act and environmentally conscious consumer behaviour: can prosocial status perceptions help overcome the gap? *International Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. 37 (3) pp 257-264